

BENWICK PARISH ASSEMBLY

Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly of Benwick, held on Monday 9th May 2022 at the village hall at 7pm.

Present: Cllrs: M Chapman (Chair), L Keppel-Spoor, R Taylor, R Few, R Emmitt, R Smith, A Miscandlon (FDC), R Robinson (Clerk) and six members of the public

1. Chairperson's Address Cllr Chapman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Confirmation of Minutes

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the Annual Assembly Meeting held on 12th April 2021 were correctly recorded and that they were signed as being a true record.

3. Benwick Parish Council Chairman's Report

Welcome to the Annual Assembly of Benwick Parish Council. Firstly, I would like to recognise that the last year has been very challenging for the Councillors and the residents of Benwick due to the impacts of the Covid 19 Pandemic. Although we are now easing ourselves out of the restrictions the disease still continues to affect many people and for some the impacts have been devastating.

Despite the Pandemic, I am pleased to state that the Council continued to function and carried out all its functions in a cost-effective manner and we once again passed the annual audit with no negative observations. In addition, we have managed to operate well within our budget and have managed to enter 2022/23 with no increase in the Parish Precept from the 2021/22 level.

The following areas are worthy of note from 2021/22.

Street Lighting

Following the upgrade of all the Parish lights to LED – helped by a grant from Fenland Council – we started the year by combining with other local Parish Councils to identify and contract for a street light contract. This was necessary after Fenland transferred ownership of the lights to Benwick.

Allotments

We also focused on trying to find allotment holders for the Council Allotment site. This area has been an issue for some years and has incurred a great deal of Councillor time and parish expense. We found it necessary, unfortunately, to look outside the village for people willing to take on an allotment. This issue will stay with us into 2022/23.

Street Furniture

Following a successful application to Turf Fen Wind Farm Fund the Parish Council received 3 benches – made from recycled plastic. These were installed, for free by Parish Councillors and a parishioner (2 on the boat mooring and one in the cemetery) for the enjoyment of visitors and parishioners.

Speed Cameras

A speed camera that records data on how many cars, and how fast, and which was procured by the Council through the Fenland Local Highways Improvement Scheme, was installed on Doddington Road. This is mobile and powered by batteries and has been maintained at zero expense to the Council and by one of the Councillors for the last year and should help to

identify areas of concern regarding speeding throughout the village. There are still some issues to be resolved but the Council will continue with this initiative into the next year.

Dog Fouling

Following complaints about dog fouling, the Council met with the Fenland Officer responsible. After a meeting it was agreed that Benwick would purchase 2 additional dog bins – one for Doddington Road and one for Ramsey Road. These would be installed by Fenland Council. Although they have not yet been installed yet this is forecast for 2022.

Armed Forces Covenant Scheme

The Parish Council agreed to show their support for current and former members of the armed forces by joining the Armed Forces Covenant Scheme. The Council look forward to developing and implementing this scheme going forward.

As we enter the 2022/23 period, the Council have a number of priorities which they will focus on. They are:

Queens Jubilee Celebration

Repair/replace the Village Sign

Introduce Dog Fouling Initiatives

Repair/ replace the Memorial Railings

Work with Benwick in Bloom regarding the Pound Development

Improve Allotment Use

Complete the Cemetery Planting Scheme

As with previous years I would like to thank all residents who take an active interest in the village for contributing the time and expense to make the village a safer more pleasant place to live. I would like to save my last thank you to the Clerk for his efforts this year, his first year in post.

Finally, I reserve my final acknowledgement to the Benwick Parish Councillors. Despite Covid they continued to dedicate their free time, and some personal expense, to serving the residents of this village. Our responsibilities are not just confined to turning up once a month for a meeting and I would like to thank them for their continued effort and support for this village going forward into the next year.

4. Financial Report

The Clerk's financial report is at Appendix 1

5. Village Organisation Reports: Benwick In Bloom

Benwick Street Pride Volunteer Group Annual Report to Parish Council. This viral Pandemic which began in 2019 and a Lockdown situation put our group very much behind with physical activities, we were however able to continue with the planning of new projects and organising funding.

Benwick in Bloom as we are more commonly known is a non profit-making group made up entirely with volunteers, we rely on funding to reinvent our summer planting themes, plus for other projects are able to access funding from various wind farms and Metal craft firm all of which we have benefited greatly. Funding for this year's flowers was achieved by holding a Christmas Fayre and one we will continue as long as we are able. Each year we have to apply to the Parish Council for funds, it would seem since Bloom began, we should be a recognised group along with Christmas

lights and be on the Parish Council expenses format instead of having to apply and trust the parish council will give this their consideration.

We have this year 2022 found ourselves back on track and those of us who are able plus a few new volunteers have achieved some good forward work in the village, namely the area known as the Shrubbery which is almost complete, and the more recent addition of the replacement tree seat bringing back a little of Benwick history to celebrate the Queen Elizabeth 2 Jubilee to which this project is dedicated, this project was funded entirely by residents of Benwick and Benwick in Bloom, another great achievement.

We are still waiting for the best solution to our project for the Pound and hope to get a solution to benefit the councils fears, matters are in progress.

The Bridge will be again in full flora as will all the containers dotted around the village in good time for the jubilee celebrations.

We will be putting more planned ideas before the parish council in due course.

We have again entered Benwick into the Anglia in Bloom Competition this serves as a great promotion for the village and its residents bringing the community together, this includes the School who give 100% as well as the Nursery School who are all doing their bit towards going for gold.

We will continue to work and serve Benwick now and into the future

Chair

Benwick in Bloom Street Pride Volunteer Group (read by Cllr Chapman).

6. Open Forum

Village sign, it has been discussed several times but has progress been made?

Cllr Chapman outlined that decisions still needed to be made by the Parish Council on repair or replacement with composite, wood or metal. The village sign is not dangerous but actually has some rotten bits. A member of the public says it looks tatty and would like it to look nicer. Options include washing the sign but that may do more damage.

Mooring, the plantings have not been attended for a while and is in need of a tidy up, except that the grass is cut, it would be nice to do something before the Benwick in bloom competition. Cllr Keppel-Spoor is planning to do something with the flower beds. Could a contractor be paid to do it? Cllr Chapman undertook that something will be done before the competition judging on 4th July. Benwick in bloom are willing to help.

Jubilee, Benwick in bloom would like to plant a couple of trees between the two bridges. This strip is not the property of the Parish. The diocese of Ely and the owner of the old vicarage own the land. The owner of the old vicarage gave permission for the two benches that are on the riverbank there.

Mooring between the two bridges, rubbish is being left at the top for the council.

Rope for the mooring was attached to the bench and nearly caused a trip. Mooring is at the discretion of the owner of the old vicarage. Can something be done to stop people mooring there long term? The parish council do not have power to stop people mooring there. CCC Highways pay for the grass to be cut.

Cllr Chapman thanked everyone for attending the assembly.

Appendix 1 – Benwick Parish Council FINANCIAL REPORT FOR YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2021

The total income for 2021-22 was £20,748.79

		£
Maintenance Grants:	Precept	£12,852.00
Council Tax Support Grant	Council Tax Support Grant	
	Concurrent	£2,593.00
	Grass Cutting	£703.88
Rents:	Town	£1,143.07
	September Gardens	£170.00
Recycling Credits		
VAT Refund		£981.69
Burials		£611.00
Bank Interest		£2.15
Grants		£1,692.00
TOTAL:		£20,748.79

Total Expenditure for the year was £16,560.83

		£
Rates		310.41
Room Hire		- 18.00
Subscriptions:	NALC LCR Magazine	
	CAPALC	436.17
	Cambs Acre	57.00
	SLCC	112.00
	Clerks & Councils Magazine	12.00
Maintenance	Verges	522.00
	Cemetery	3,458.39
Insurance		763.68
Energy		761.04
Professional Charges	Internal Auditor	135.00
	External Auditor	200.00
	ICO	35.00
Sundries		157.92
Telephone/Internet		103.12
Post & Stationery		168.06
Travel		138.60
Clerk's annual office expenses		150.00
Training		340.00
VAT Paid		1,200.12

Wages/PAYE-NI		5,148.56
SUB TOTALS:		14,191.07
Development Projects		1,750.71
Local Highways Improvement		289.05
S137 Payment	British Legion Poppy Wreath	30.00
Donations/Charity		300.00
TOTAL:		16,560.83

This resulted in Underspend for year of £2,023.17 excluding elections
(20-21 £167.52)

with Earmarked Reserves at the year-end of

Parish Plan	£532.89
Verge Planting	£67.13
Cemetery Extension	£6,604.17
Street Lighting	£7,875.62
The Pound	£2,000.00
War Memorial	£4,000.00
Mooring	£4,133.66
Allotments	£2,191.35

Assets amount to £ 108,081.77 going forward to the present year.

This has increased from last year by £2,573.40 due to the provision of a new bench and the MVAS traffic calming signs.

Earmarked reserves carried forward to the present year are as follows:-

Parish Plan	£532.89
Verge Planting	£1,067.13
Cemetery Extension	£6,604.17
Street Lighting	£9,875.62
Jubilee Celebrations	£1,270.00
The Pound	£2,000.00
Village Sign	£1,000.00
War Memorial	£6,000.00
Mooring	£8,133.66
Allotments	£2,191.35